

CLAIMS

1. A switching system for coupling a telecommunications device to a wireless network or a wireline network, the system comprising:

5 a wireless telecommunication interface configured to couple to a wireless telecommunications device configured to transfer data to and from a wireless telecommunications network;

10 a wireline phone interface configured to couple to a wireline-network phone;

a wireline network interface configured to couple to a wireline phone network;

15 a switching mechanism configured to selectively couple the wireline-network phone interface to the wireless telecommunication interface or to the wireline network interface; and

a controller coupled to the switching mechanism and configured to control the selective coupling effected by the switching mechanism.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the controller is configured to control the switching mechanism in accordance with at least one of a wireless rate structure associated with the wireless telecommunication device and a wireline rate structure associated with the wireline phone network.

3. The system of claim 2 wherein the controller is configured to control the selective coupling of the switching mechanism depending on which coupling will likely

yield a cheaper effective rate for a call being sent from the wireline-network phone.

4. The system of claim 3 wherein the controller is configured to control the selective coupling of the switching mechanism depending on at least one of instantaneous rates associated with the wireless telecommunications device and the wireline-network phone, whether the call is local or long distance, to where the call is directed, the rate structures, typical amounts of call minutes from the wireless telecommunication device, and typical amounts of call minutes from the wireline-network phone.
5. The system of claim 4 wherein the rate structures are affected by at least one of amounts of free minutes, time of day, and day of week.
6. The system of claim 3 wherein the effective rate for a call is a present rate.
7. The system of claim 3 wherein the effective rate for a call is an average rate.
8. The system of claim 1 further comprising another wireless telecommunication interface configured to couple to another wireless telecommunications device, wherein the switching mechanism is configured to selectively couple the wireline phone interface to the wireless telecommunication interface, the another wireless telecommunication interface, or to the wireline network interface.

9. The system of claim 1 further comprising at least another wireline phone interface configured to couple to another wireline-network phone, wherein the switching mechanism is configured to selectively couple the wireline phone interface or the at least another wireline phone interface to the wireless telecommunication interface or to the wireline network interface.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein the at least another wireline phone interface comprises seven wireline phone interfaces.

11. The system of claim 1 further comprising another wireline network interface configured to couple to the wireline phone network, wherein the switching mechanism is configured to selectively couple the wireline phone interface to the wireless telecommunication interface, to the wireline network interface, or to the another wireline network interface.

12. The system of claim 1 wherein the wireline phone interface is a first wireline phone interface, and the wireline network interface is a first wireline network interface, the system further comprising:

20 a plurality of second wireline phone interfaces configured to couple to a plurality of wireline-network phones; and

a second wireline network interface configured to couple to the wireline phone

network;

wherein the switching mechanism is configured to selectively couple at least one of the second wireline phone interfaces to the second wireline network interface.

5 13. The system of claim 1 wherein the wireless telecommunication interface is configured to wirelessly couple to the wireless telecommunications device.

14. The system of claim 13 wherein the wireless telecommunication interface is configured to wirelessly communicate with the wireless telecommunications device 10 according to a short-range wireless communication protocol.

15. The system of claim 14 wherein the wireless protocol is the Bluetooth® protocol.

16. The system of claim 1 further comprising an inter-system communication interface configured to couple to and communicate with another switching system as recited in claim 1 and further including another inter-system communication interface.

17. The system of claim 1 wherein the wireless telecommunications device is 20 a mobile phone.

18. A method of providing mobile communication service, the method

comprising:

providing wireless communication capacity for a wireless communication device, the communication capacity associated with a first rate structure for communication with the wireless communication device;

5        determining that the wireless communication device is near a stationary base unit configured to communicate with the wireless device; and  
adjusting the rate structure associated with the wireless device to a second rate structure that is different than the first rate structure.

10        19.      The method of claim 18 wherein the determining includes receiving an indication of proximity of the wireless device to the relatively-stationary base unit from the base unit.

20.      The method of claim 18 wherein the determining includes receiving an indication of proximity of the wireless device to the relatively-stationary base unit from the wireless device.

21.      The method of claim 18 wherein the second rate structure more closely resembles a rate structure associated with a wireline service rate structure than the first rate structure.

22.      The method of claim 18 further comprising redirecting a call coming into

the wireless device through a wireline network to a wireline phone connected to the base unit.

23. A system for coupling a wireline phone to a mobile-phone network, the  
5 system comprising:

a mobile-phone interface configured to couple to a mobile phone and to transfer information between the mobile-phone interface and the mobile phone according to a mobile-phone protocol; and

10 a wireline-phone interface coupled to the mobile-phone interface and configured to couple to a wireline-network phone and to transfer information between the wireline-phone interface and the wireline-network phone according to a wireline-phone protocol; whereby a call can be made from the wireline-network phone connected to the wireline-interface through a mobile-phone network associated with the mobile phone connected to the mobile-phone interface.

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24. The system of claim 23 further comprising:

a mobile phone coupled to the mobile-phone interface; and  
a wireline phone coupled to the wireline-phone interface.

20 25. A telephone interface system capable of coupling to a plurality of wireline telephone extensions independently, capable of coupling to a wireline telecommunications network through a plurality of independent connections, and capable

of independently coupling to a plurality of mobile telephones associated with at least one mobile-phone network, the system providing connection capability for calls to be completed between wireline extensions through the system, and the system providing connection capability for calls to be completed through the system between a wireline extension connected to the system and at least one of the mobile telephones connected to the system.

26. The system of claim 25 wherein the system is capable of coupling to at least one of the mobile phones wirelessly.

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27. The system of claim 26 wherein the system is capable of coupling to at least one of the mobile phones wirelessly in accordance with a short-range wireless protocol.

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28. The system of claim 25 further configured to selectively couple at least one wireline extension to at least one of the wireline network and at least one mobile telephone.

29. The system of claim 25 further configured to couple to another system according to claim 25.

30. The system of claim 29 configured to be capable of coupling a connection

from the system to an extension, the wireline telecommunications network, or a mobile telephone, through the another system to an extension, a wireline telecommunications network, or a mobile telephone coupled to the another system.